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ABSTRACT

In this paper, perspectives for planning future research in urban education are suggested. Results of a review of data from almost 600 large city programs on action learning, basic skills, cultural pluralism and school-community interaction are listed. A selective bibliography on urban education covers the problems of educating urban youth, fiscal priorities, school-community relationships, political and legal realities, and strategies in school management. (WI)

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Partnership For Progress in Urban Education - November 1978

A Planning Perspective
and
A Selective Bibliography
for
Research in Urban Education

Research for Better Schools

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I. A Planning Perspective

As urban education approaches the start of the next decade, a backward glance reveals the concerns of desegregation, decentralization, community representation, economic flight, the emergence of minority leadership, the development of substantial bilingual populations and many other issues characteristic of the turbulent times of the 1960's and 1970's. Will these issues continue to dominate urban education in the 1980's, or will different concerns and opportunities present themselves?

What should the planning and research agenda be for urban education? The five program themes of this conference provide one perspective for planning future research. These program topics are:

Educating Urban Youth;
Fiscal Priorities;
Emerging Partnerships;
Political and Legal Realities;
Strategies in School Management.

Before turning to a selective bibliography organized around the conference themes, it is useful to review the findings of the "Urban Education Studies" conducted by Francis S. Chase. These studies were initiated in the Spring of 1977 with support from the Spencer Foundation. Thirty of the large city school districts provided data on a total of almost 600 programs in four designated areas: Action-Learning, Basic Skills, Cultural Pluralism and School/Community Interaction. A review of the successful programs described by the thirty districts and the

follow-up site visits in five cities provides support for the following summary of encouraging developments:

1. Urban Education has an inner vitality which is generating innovative programs and strategies of great potential even in the midst of extremely adverse conditions.

2. There is a deepening concern for the needs not well served by traditional schooling. Fewer educators and board members now attribute low achievement to inherent disabilities, lack of effort, or poverty of parents; and more and more are revising upward their expectations for students formerly regarded as slow learners.

3. An increasing number of community agencies and groups are joining with schools to develop enriched environments for learning; and the gulf between schools and society is being bridged in many new ways. The recruitment of citizen volunteers to serve as counselors, resource persons, and tutors is gaining momentum; and larger and larger numbers of parents are being involved as partners in the education of their own and other children.

4. Innovative programs and alternatives are producing significant changes in the character of educational experiences provided at both elementary and secondary levels. With the active support and participation of community organizations and citizens, educators in many cities are creating significant alternatives to traditional and inappropriate classroom experiences.

5. The conditions essential to the success of magnet schools and other options are beginning to be better understood; and progress is being made toward creation of the essential conditions. Systematic curriculum development and modification is proceeding with improved provisions for initial and continuing staff development. Moreover, there is beginning to be a more general acceptance of the importance of evaluation at every stage of development, implementation, and subsequent operation.

6. Federal intervention--through grants and contracts, equal opportunity requirements, and court decrees--have either triggered or expedited a high proportion of the innovations which urban districts rate as unusually successful.

7. Local and situational factors--including program leadership, staff and district commitment, and effectiveness of implementation--are crucial to program success.

8. Continuous program evaluation, adaptation to revealed student needs, and staff development are essential to continuing program success and local support.

9. Most of the highly successful and promising programs represent significant departures from traditional schooling through emphasis on student choice and responsibility, experience - based education, and greater use of resources outside of the school.

10. The many promising approaches and programs, which are now offering invigorating educational experiences to some of the previously disadvantaged, can be made available to increased numbers of students through systematic needs assessment, curriculum and staff development, and continuing professional and citizen collaboration toward equality and excellence.

These findings seem to indicate that progress in urban education is possible and is proceeding, but partnerships are desirable, if not essential. In this regard, a critical issue for the 1980's is whether the improvement of urban education will be intergral to urban revitalization, or only a secondary factor which is forced to react to other circumstances.

II. Work in Progress

In developing a series of background papers for this conference, we have asked a number of researchers to rethink their perspective on urban education and the environment in which it occurs. The changing nature of urbanism and the changing structure of opportunity are two important considerations, as are management, budgeting and political issues. Within this turbulent context the analysis of traditional educational variables may need to be reconceptualized. Urban educational research in the 1980's faces exciting opportunities.

III. A Bibliography *

The attached bibliography is selective. It was not intended to be exhaustive nor be conceptually representative of the field of urban studies. It does, however, present a very careful review of information related to the five topics of the conference with the addition of a "general" category for those references which scan the entire range of the conference.

The citations cover a wide breadth of inclusion criteria. There is a heavy leaning toward "state-of-the-art" reviews which include bibliographies useful to the student and new evaluations of policy and trends in planning. It was also considered useful to students of the field to cite works from a variety of sources; perhaps thereby introducing them to valuable, yet untrapped, resources in their individual work. Current items have been included to draw attention to recent work which may not be in standard indexes. Works, considered basic in the field, e.g. Jencks, C., et al. Inequality, have not been listed under the assumption they are known to the student of the field.

Given the scope of the topic, the bibliography is only a guide to the wealth of literature resources available. We believe it provides base information and sources to utilize in your individual work.

* (The bibliographies were provided by Marian Chapman and Ellen Newcombe of the Resource Center, Research for Better Schools, whose cooperation is appreciated.)

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FOURTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN EDUCATION

PHILADELPHIA, PA NOVEMBER 18-21, 1978

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